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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [TSPL](#) [KNNP](#) [ETTC](#) [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: INDIA TRIES TO OUTFLANK COMMUNISTS WITH GLOBAL
NUCLEAR PUSH

REF: NEW DELHI 223

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Atul Keshap for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The wintertime flurry of diplomatic engagement between India and China, the UK, Australia, Canada and France has provided the opportunity for the Indian government to demonstrate to its Communist coalition partners the full international dimension of civil nuclear cooperation and its benefits for India's standing in global affairs. Prime Minister Singh managed to extract a more forward-leaning, though still ambiguous, statement from the Chinese during his January 8-9 visit in Beijing, while UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown reiterated his government's strong support for an Indian exception in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) during his January 21 New Delhi meetings. Moreover, French President Nicolas Sarkozy finalized a bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement during his January 25-26 New Delhi sojourn. Although Canada and Australia remain undecided, the Indian government pressed both countries to back India in the NSG during high-level visits as well. These consistent messages to visitors have demonstrated the Indian government's persistent focus on following through on its nuclear obligations, while attempting to emphasize the multilateral, non-U.S. aspect of the initiative to its Communist coalition partners. End summary.

France Finalizes Negotiations on Bilateral Agreement

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¶2. (SBU) As expected, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh "finalized negotiation in regard to reaching a bilateral agreement for civil nuclear cooperation," according to the January 25 Joint Statement. The Joint Statement reiterates that "both sides look forward to the finalization of India specific safeguards agreement with the IAEA and the adjustment of international civil nuclear cooperation framework. France expressed its support for the same." Hugues de Longevialle, Energy Counselor at the French Embassy, told poloff January 26 that the Indians had made sure that the French agreement would go no further than the 123 Agreement. At their January 25 press conference, PM Singh reiterated his intention to conclude an IAEA safeguards agreement. "One must recognize that international negotiations do take time. Our discussions are moving forward. I sincerely hope they can be concluded successfully without much loss of time," he told reporters. Sarkozy said that India and the IAEA would resolve the issue

in "a matter of weeks."

13. (C) The Joint Statement also set out an ambitious program of joint civil nuclear research, including Indian Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) participation in the Jules Horowitz reactor. De Longevialle noted that the French will likely engage with scientists from the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC) and Kalpakkam, where the fast breeder program resides.

Asked if the French had debated whether to collaborate with facilities that rested on the strategic side of the separation plan, de Longevialle dismissed such concerns, explaining that the French government had looked at the appropriateness of the research topics rather than the specific partners.

UK Reiterates Its Nuclear Support

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14. (SBU) British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's January 21 visit to New Delhi also produced a strong commitment from the UK to "support the India-U.S. civil nuclear cooperation initiative with all its elements, including an appropriate India specific exemption to the Nuclear Suppliers Group Guidelines," according to the Joint Statement. The UK and India also agreed to work "expeditiously towards a bilateral agreement for this purpose." Victoria Whitford, First Secretary from the British High Commission, noted that the

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British informed the Indians that it will begin negotiations on a bilateral agreement after the IAEA and NSG takes action.

She also clarified that while the nuclear issue figured heavily in the Joint Statement, the two sides did not engage in a detailed civil nuclear discussion.

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Chinese Won't Block NSG

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15. (C) The Indian government emphasized the civil nuclear issue after PM Singh's January 13-15 visit to Beijing, briefing the press extensively on the fact that China would not oppose an NSG exemption for India. The Joint Statement, titled "A Shared Vision for the 21st Century," states that "the two sides pledge to promote bilateral cooperation in civil nuclear energy, consistent with their respective international commitments, which will contribute to energy security and to dealing with risks associated with climate change." Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon told the press that the document represented "a clear expression of the will to cooperation in this nuclear area." Menon explained to the Ambassador a week later that, instead of outright support, China would inform the NSG of its plans for bilateral civil nuclear cooperation with India, implying that it backs an NSG exemption (reftel).

Australia and Canada Still Have Concerns

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16. (C) While the Indians gathered support, the Canadians and Australians made clear that their governments have yet to make a concrete decision. Canadian Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier discussed the nuclear issue Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Special Envoy Shyam Saran and National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan during his January 10-12 visit to New Delhi, during which Bernier repeated Canadian interest in collaborating in the area of nuclear safety. A week later, the Indian side gave the hard sell to visiting Deputy Foreign Minister Leonard Edwards. According to Canadian Political Counselor Adrian Norfolk, MEA Secretary (West) Nalin Surie encouraged Edwards to campaign on Canada's behalf in the IAEA and NSG. Both Bernier and Edwards reminded the Indian government that their Cabinet has not yet made a decision, although Canada remained "cautious, but open." Bernier also underlined the importance of going to

the Board of Governors before the NSG, Norfolk said.

17. (SBU) The Australians, meanwhile, attempted to clarify the new Labour-led government's civil nuclear policy. Following Foreign Minister January 21 assertion that Australia would not sell uranium to India unless India signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), Australian High Commissioner John McCarthy differentiated uranium sales from an NSG position at a January 23 press gathering. "Our (NSG) position is still to be considered by the Ministers," he told the media, whereas the Rudd government had made a pre-election promise not to supply uranium to non-NPT signatories.

Comment: India Gets Its Nuclear Passport Stamped

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18. (C) The Indian government's extensive winter diplomacy has fulfilled the promise of Mukherjee's metaphor, offered during the winter Parliament session, which compared the nuclear deal to an "international passport" that opens up the global civil nuclear marketplace and the international security architecture to India. With both the French and Russian agreements awaiting completion of the IAEA safeguards agreement and NSG exception, the Indian government appears to have purposely generated a backlog of nuclear "to do" items besides the U.S.-centric 123 Agreement. In doing so, the growing press of pending international business may persuade the Left, which has hinted at supporting non-U.S. bilateral nuclear agreements, to back off and allow the Indian government to complete the IAEA and NSG steps. In fact, Communist Party of India (CPI) General Secretary A.B. Bardhan raised the question in the press January 23. "Why talk only to America; the Russian and French governments are ready with the agreement, so some solution has to be found, where the 123 does not go through but we can carry on nuke trade," he said. If the Left allows the Indian government to go ahead with the IAEA and NSG, by the time the U.S. Congress approves the 123 Agreement, the Congress Party could then sign the 123 Agreement as a step to differentiate itself from the Left and earn a foreign policy victory just as campaigning begins for the 2009 general elections in India. To that end, if it is indeed the Indian calculus, the UPA government is trying to show that the deal is truly international in nature.

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